

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
September 24, 2008; 4:30 p.m.
Council Chambers**

PRESENT	ABSENT
Akua B. Agyei	Jason Staley
Ian Kohen	Tony McClendon
Greg Lewis	
Trena Carter	
Gil Palmer	
Rosalind Pegram	
John Roberts	
John Stroh	
Pam Vincent	
Shiva Rallapalli	

STAFF PRESENT:

Director Arlette Tinsley and Secretary, Lula Young.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Commissioner Roberts called roll. He then requested any corrections or amendments to the August 27, 2008 Minutes.

Commissioner Lewis moved to accept the August 27, 2008 minutes. Commissioner Agyei seconded. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Commissioner Agyei reported there was no activity over the last month and the Donations balance remains at \$6,819.95.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Tinsley reminded Commissioners of the Ordinance, Rules and Regulations requirement that she not discuss the details of active cases but that she does need to report on types of cases that are filed with the office. She went on to report that the first sexual orientation in employment complaint had been filed and that she and Deputy Director Smith had bench-marked other agencies to create the first letter requesting voluntary mediation of a sexual orientation complaint. In addition to the complaint process, she and the deputy director will prepare a report on the process even if the parties involved don't cooperate with the investigation and/or mediation.

Director Tinsley applauded Commissioners on taking the initiative to make the change to the Rules and Regulations that allowed the complaint to be filed and on their decision to appoint a commission liaison to the Gay/Straight Alliance (G/SA), improving communications between the G/SA and Commission. The Director went on to advise that the G/SA members and liaison,

Commissioner Kohen were made aware of the complaint filing through other sources; the complainant was familiar with seeing Commissioner Kohen attend the G/SA meetings and was able to approach him with questions. Discussion ensued.

Director Tinsley reported on two meetings she had attended at First Presbyterian Church, at the request of Pastor Rob Craig, regarding approximately fifteen Latino families residing in Garden City Trailer Park who were impacted by the flood. She continued by advising Commissioners that technical assistance concerning flood recovery and home repairs was requested of her after church members had witnessed the condition of homes in the Garden City area during their volunteer efforts. After reminding Commissioners of previous housing complaints from many Latino residents in the Garden City mobile home park, Director Tinsley reported that the following persons were invited, and attended, the second meeting: a representative from the Long-Term Flood Recovery committee, Laura Hurt, Healthy Communities Initiative; Magda Corpus, the Su Casa Director and Mary Ellen Nelson, BCSC home/school partner. Director Tinsley advised that the pastor and church members were gathering information on ways to assist residents in that area and that she had encouraged them to engage the landlord. Discussion ensued.

Director Tinsley advised Commissioners that she had met with Sarla Kalsi and Lorraine Smith, co-chairs of the Heritage Fund's Outreach Committee and that the committee was moving forward with the creation of a multi-ethnic organization. The Outreach Committee officially changed the group's name to C.A.M.E.O. – Columbus Area Multi-Ethnic Organization. She continued by advising that her involvement with the organization would be to temporarily support the sub-groups and facilitate their efforts to define their mission and development of their work plans. Director Tinsley voiced her support in the creation of C.A.M.E.O. as the community's minority population is changing very quickly and complaints are being filed alleging discrimination between minority groups. She went on to provide data about the increases and growth projections of the minority population within the community. Discussion ensued.

OPEN FORUM:

Commissioner Roberts announced that on Wednesday, October 1st, the installation of the Remnant Trust would take place at the Columbus Learning Center. He invited all to attend between 5:00 and 8:00 p.m. He commented on the rare opportunity to view historical documents such as the Magna Carta with Blackstone's original notes.

Director Tinsley addressed the three news articles distributed to Commissioners. She advised that the editorial written about the NAACP Education Summit and the guest opinion written by Jane Sims. Director Tinsley advised that the final report on disproportionality is slated to be released on October 15, 2008, and that she had shared a copy of the draft to school superintendent, Dr. Quick. She went on to voice her concern that the focus appears to be on disproportionality in special education and not on racial disproportionality. Director Tinsley discussed the issue of subjective versus objective discipline categories culminating in suspensions and expulsions. The third article shared by Director Tinsley was an editorial by Amos Brown printed in the Indianapolis Recorder discussing the proposed elimination of a UniGov office in Indianapolis. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Roberts shared information on a visit to Ivy Tech, by the Chancellor of Diversity, Judge Gregory Kellam Scott and his presentation on diversity issues within the college.

Commissioner Vincent reported to Commissioners and staff that she was researching the cost of telephone fees being charged to inmates and the legality of the amount of the current fees of \$6.00 for the first minute and the rate for additional minutes. Director Tinsley advised that she will provide her with contact information for the ICLU to assist her in the research.

WILLIAM R. LAWS AWARD:

Commissioner Greg Lewis, reporting on behalf of the Laws Award Committee, reported that he and Commissioner Pegram, with Deputy Director Smith providing technical assistance, met to review and consider the nominations received for 2008 and 2009. Commissioner Lewis advised Commissioners that not only did they review the nomination letters; the committee considered many parameters during their selection process.

Commissioner Lewis announced that the recommendation of the committee is to jointly present the 2009 William R. Laws Human Rights Award to Tim Solso and Joe Loughrey. He went on to highlight points in one of the nomination letters supporting the Committee's recommendation. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Roberts moved to accept the Committee's recommendation to jointly award the 2009 William R. Laws Human Rights Award to Tim Solso and Joe Loughrey. Commissioner Stroh seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Follow-up Discussion – Youth Mobilizers

Director Tinsley discussed the previous presentation by Youth Mobilizers identifying their desire to have a common place for area youth to meet and socialize. She went on to discuss their data that identified that 70% of students surveyed were not involved in any school-related activity. She went on to ask Commissioners for their thoughts on whether there was room or sufficient interest for another youth activity. The Director reviewed the information on other human rights agencies changing their local ordinances to create a youth human rights commission or youth representatives on the existing commission. Discussion involving student engagement, sub-committee research and current resources ensued. Director Tinsley received the Chairperson's approval to contact the Vice-chair to appoint a sub-committee to gather data surrounding interest in a youth commission or youth representation on the commission. Commissioners Lewis, Volunteer Rallapalli and Commissioner Roberts volunteered to serve on the sub-committee.

LIAISON UPDATE – INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY COALITION:

Commissioner Stroh reported on the work that the Coalition is doing for their January or February presentation by Miguel De la Torr , a Southern Baptist Minister from Colorado who describes his journey from being a very anti- gay basher to supporting inclusion. He went on to report that the Coalition has received grants from both the Heritage Fund (\$2,000) and First Presbyterian Church totaling \$3,000.00. The Coalition is currently searching for a venue and would like to submit a request to the Commission for funding in the amount of \$200. Commissioner Stroh requested that the request for funding be included on the October meeting agenda. He went on to advise that the Coalition is currently considering North Christian Church as the location.

LIAISON UPDATE – INTERFAITH FORUM:

Commissioner Lewis advised that the Inter-Faith Forum distributed invitations inviting spiritual leaders to attend an Interfaith Forum meeting. The topic for the last meeting was, "What is your vision of the after-life." Commissioner Lewis advised that the attendance increased from 12 to 26. Commissioner Lewis issued an invitation to fellow Commissioners to attend the next Inter-Faith Forum meeting held on the first Wednesday of the month at 11:30 a.m. in City Hall.

LIAISON UPDATE – MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS COMMITTEE:

Commissioner Agyei reported that the Multi-Cultural Awareness Committee is busy preparing for Ethnic Expo and that the host country will be China. She informed Commissioners of a new activity, a scavenger hunt, had been added for expo visitor participation.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Commissioner Roberts announced that the 2008 Columbus Historical Society Homes Tour would take place October 10 and 11th. He advised Commissioners about the route of this year's Homes Tour and the ticket price.

Commission Volunteer Rallapalli reported on his attendance at the annual community event sponsored by Faith, Hope and Love Church at Pence Street Park. He advised that both the Commission and NAACP (Gwen Wiggins) were in attendance to provide information to attendees.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Stroh moved to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Carter seconded. Meeting adjourned.